

# IN AMERICAN JOHN V. A. WEAVER

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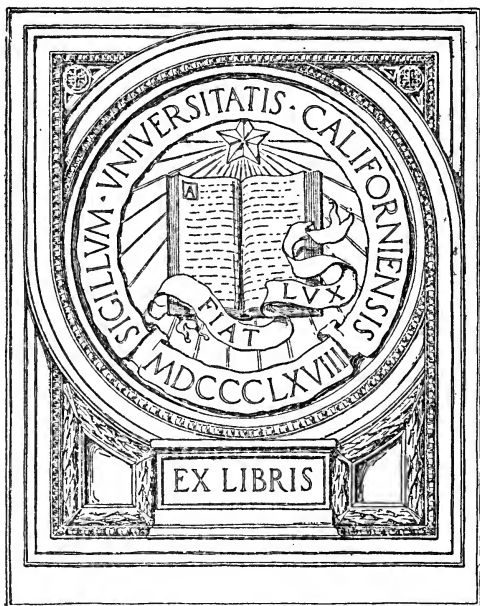
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IN AMERICAN  
POEMS

*NEW BORZOI POETRY*  
*SPRING 1921*

UNACCUSTOMED AS I AM

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# In American—Poems

By John V. A. Weaver



New York

Mcmxxi

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TO THE  
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BUREAU OF THE  
NAVY

*By Alfred A. Knoff*

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*TO CECIL*

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Coleridge  
IN AMERICAN  
POEMS



"Nothin' or everythin', it's got to be,"

Nocturne

You says, and hides your face down on my arm.

"If it meant nothin', 'twouldn't do no harm,  
Or either everythin'— but this way — see? . . ."

I feel your tremblin' heart against my coat,

And the big arc-light moon grins down so cool,

"Go on!" I think it says, "you softie  
fool!" . . .

I love you so it hurts me in my throat. . . .

"Don't make me kiss you; sure, I know you  
could,"

You're pleadin', "And we gone too far for  
play;

I care a lot . . . but yet not so's to say

I love you yet. . . . Aw, help me to be  
good!" . . .

Oh, darlin', darlin', can't you let it be  
Nothin' to you, and everythin' to me?

Élégie I wished I'd took the ring, not the Victrola.  
Américaine You get so tired of records, hearin' an' hearin' 'em,  
And when a person don't have much to spend  
They feel they shouldn't ought to be so wasteful.  
And then these warm nights makes it slow inside,  
And sittin's lovely down there by the lake  
Where him and me would always use ta go.

He thought the Vic'd make it easier  
Without him; and it did at first. I'd play  
Some jazz-band music and I'd almost feel  
His arms around me, dancin'; after that  
I'd turn out all the lights, and set there quiet  
Whiles Alma Gluck was singin', "Home, Sweet  
Home,"  
And almost know his hand was strokin' my hand.

"If I was you, I'd take the Vic," he says.  
"It's somethin' you can use; you can't a ring.  
Wisht I had ways ta make a record for you,

So's I could be right with you, even though  
Uncle Sam had me." . . . Now I'm glad he  
didn't;

Élégie  
Américaine

It would be lots too much like seein' ghosts  
Now that I'm sure he never won't come back. . . .

Oh, God! I don't see how I ever stand it!  
He was so big and strong! He was a darb!  
The swellest dresser, with them nifty shirts  
That fold down, and them lovely nobby shoes,  
And always all his clothes would be one color,  
Like green socks with green ties, and a green  
hat,  
And everything. . . . We never had no words  
Or hardly none. . . .

And now to think that mouth  
I useta kiss is bitin' into dirt,  
And through them curls I useta smooth, a bullet  
Has went. . . .

I wisht it would of killed me, too. . . .

Oh, well . . . about the Vic. . . . I guess I'll  
sell it

And get a small ring anyways. (I won't  
Get but a half as good a one as if  
He spent it all on that when he first ast me.)  
It don't seem right to play jazz tunes no more  
With him gone. And it ain't a likely chanst

Élégie        I'd find nobody ever else again  
Américaine   Would suit me, or I'd suit.   And so a little  
                 Quarter of a karat, maybe, but a real one  
                 That I could sparkle, sometimes, and remember  
                 The home I should of had. . . .

And still, you know,  
The Vic was his idea, and so. . . .

I wonder. . .

Pardon me, lady, but I wanta ast you                                 Drug  
For God's sake, stop that tappin'. I'll go nuts, Store  
Plain bug-house if I hear that "Tap-tap-tap"  
Much longer! . . .

Now I went and used such langwidge  
I got to tell you why. . . . Well, in the first  
place

My business is all shot. Now drugs themselves  
Don't pay much, and the extry stuff, like candy,  
Cigars and stationery and et cetera  
Don't make their keep. And that damn soda-  
fountain ——

Excuse me, lady, but I just can't help it! . . .

Some day I'm gointa catch the guy I bought it off.

I'm losin' money every day it's here.

And soda-jerkers — now I can't get none

For love or money, so myself I got to

Mess with them malted milks, banana splits

And slop like that. And just as doggone sure

Drug  
Store

As I start workin' on some fine prescription,  
The kind I love to mix, got to be careful,  
The weights is hittin' on that perfect balance —  
Why then some fool wants a marshmallow sun-  
dae,  
And, "Tap-tap-tap" he starts in on the show-  
case,  
And taps and taps 'til I come runnin' out,  
Leavin' the drugs half-done. . . .

And that ain't all;  
Here's the big trouble: I can't talk good gram-  
mar.

People don't think a man that mixes drugs  
Can do it right, and talk the way I do.  
It makes me sick. Why have I got to sound  
Like a school teacher? Why, I know my stuff.  
"Registered Pharmacist," see? I taught myself  
Workin' at night whiles I was four years clerkin'.  
And then I took three months down at the U,  
And passed a fine exam. But here's the thing:  
I quit the public school in seventh grade,  
And never paid no attention to my talk.  
So it's the way I tell you: they're suspicious  
Because I use such slang. I try to stop  
But it's too late now. I found out too late. . . .

I got a dream of what I'll do some day:  
I want to quit this drug stuff altogether,

Have a nice office, with a big oak desk,  
And sell just real estate. I'd like to bet  
I'd make a clean-up at it. It'd be swell,  
That office. . . .

Drug  
Store

But this life is killin' me,  
It's the fool questions they keeps askin' me.  
You see that clock there? Well, just on a guess  
Three times an hour some silly fish comes in here  
And calls me out, and asts me, "Is that right?  
Is your clock right?"—Honest to Heaven, lady,  
One day I got so sore I took a hammer  
And smashed the face in. And it cost twelve dol-  
lars  
To fix it. But I had peace for a week. . . .

Oh, gosh, my nerves! . . . But that's the way  
it is.

I'm sorry I spoke so rough about that tappin',  
But when I get to sellin' real estate  
They'll be no place where folks can take a coin  
And tap, and tap 'til I come runnin' out.  
That's a man's business! . . .

If I ever get it. . . .

“ Ol’  
Mammy  
Don’t ”

I useta think the reason why some folks  
Just couldn’t seem to get nowheres was Luck.  
But Luck ain’t such a much, I come to think.  
It’s somethin’ queer about theirsself that does it.

Now, what I mean, you take this here Miss Ames.  
Ten year ago she run the Fish Department,  
And everybody said that for a woman  
She had a business chanst was wonderful.  
But all she does now is to set out there  
And pass on letters, and that sort of stuff,  
To see that nothin’ ain’t again the rules.

Oh, yeh, she keeps her job. They got to have  
her.

You can be sure that what she says is truth.  
Even Miss Cole, the manager, has got  
To ast for her O. K.— But just the same,  
Miss Cole she gets a salary that’s easy.  
Ten times what this Miss Ames drags down per  
week.

You see, Miss Ames, she thinks things out all back- " Ol'  
wards. Mammy  
The Boss oncet said the whole thing in a mouth- Don't "  
ful:

" She can't start nothin', ain't got no idears  
On how to get things goin'. She don't know  
A single way to do a thing — but say,  
She'll tell you fifty ways how to not do it."

The girls around here calls her " Mammy  
Don't " . . .

One day I hands her quite a piece o' work,  
To give it the once-over. In a hour  
I come back, and I says, " Well, how's it goin'? "  
She gives a frown, and looks at me, and says,  
" I'm tryin' hard to find out somethin'  
wrong." . . .

Au  
Revoir

Don't kiss me! Not no more! . . . Oh, can't  
you see?

Everythin's perfect now, the way it is.

Why do I hafta fight and beg like this?

It's been so sweet — oh, can't you leave things  
be?

Oh, now I hurt you! Dear, don't look so  
sad. . . .

Ah, gee, I guess men ain't got ways to know

How a girl feels, and when it's time to go,

And how too much of even kisses is bad.

But it's the things you didn't just quite do,

And what's left over for some other day

That makes her wonder and hope and cry and  
pray,

And tell herself, "Next time!" and dream of  
you.

Good night, dear . . . you must go . . . it's for  
your sake. . . .

I'll dream about that kiss you didn't take. . . .

## Prayer

Oh, God, that dwellest 'way up there,  
I want to pray a bran-new prayer.  
It ain't the kind I useta say  
To make me be good every day;  
It ain't the kind my mother taught,  
It's somethin' that I shouldn't ought —  
It's selfish — maybe bad — but oh,  
Listen — God — I love him so!

I guess Thou knows it any way,  
But this is what I want ta say:  
Make me so wonderful that he  
Can't think of nothin' else but me!  
Make my lips red just like wine,  
Gi' my hair a golden shine,  
Gi' my eyes a lovely light,  
Make my body round and white. . . .

God, it can't be wicked of me  
Beggin' Thee to make him love me,  
Is it, God? I know I never

## Prayer

Felt this way before, or ever  
Dreamt no man would come along  
Makin' my heart beat like a song —  
God, this love that come to me  
Is just like when I think of Thee! . . .

Let him love just me alone,  
Make him be my very own!  
I guess that's lots to ast, but oh,  
God,— dear God — I love him so! . . .

Amen. . . .

When I was a kid, on a fresh Spring day                      Fair  
I useta go at sun-up to get the smell o' May;              Exchange  
And say! The waves o' perfumes that they  
                 would always be!

All the flowers in the world, so it looked to me,  
Was mixed with the good ol' fresh-dug ground —  
A kind of smell that God his self would like to  
         have around.

I couldn't find the smell o' the Spring today.  
Somethin' is happened — took it clean away.  
The same kinda apple-blooms was shinin' on the  
         tree —

I guess it ain't the Spring changed — it must be  
         me.

Take my money — take my house — every single  
         thing —

Oh, Mr. Yesterday! — Let me smell the Spring!

Dénoûement So now I get the dirty throwdown, huh?  
What do I mean? Yeh, that's a good one, ain't  
it?  
How do you get that way? You think I'm blind?  
I seen you with that girl the other night!

Aw, Frank, how could ya ever come to do it?  
I ain't changed, am I? Ain't I just as swell?  
Don't my eyes shine the same way, just for you?  
Don't you remember out to old San Soozy  
We win long-distance prizes, dancin' together?  
You says, "You keep the prize; what's mine is  
yourn,  
And vicey versy." Yes, and don't you remember  
When you — when you first kissed me in Jim's  
Ford,  
And all them lovely things you says to me,  
And me believin' 'em, because I loved you? . . .

I should of knew, I should of knew, I should of!  
Men is the same, kiddin' a girl along,

Makin' her love 'em, till she lost her brains  
And done what never can't be undid now!

Dénoûement

But still. . . .

That night the stars was winkin' down,  
And looked so bright and happy, just like me.  
The little waves was chucklin' 'round the boat,  
You and the wind took turns, kissin' my forrid.  
Down underneath I felt the engines pumpin'  
Just like your heart, pressin' against my cheeks.

The lights was out, it was so dark and haunted,  
I felt so safe with them big arms around me,  
And dreamy, with the niggers singin' soft,  
Playin' their yukalalies. And I says,—  
Don't you remember what I says? I says,  
" See them two rows o' lights along the shore?  
Them is the city's teeth, shinin' so white;  
The city's laughin', just like you and me;  
Laughin' and laughin'. Everybody's glad." . . .

The fool I was! The stupid, crazy fool!  
I listened to your talk, give in to you,  
Lovin' you heart and soul, never went home  
Till noon, lied to 'em all — and now — and  
now —

I'm finished! — Thrun away! . . . Them lights  
*was teeth,*

Dénoûement The teeth the city's got, to tear and tear me —  
Murderin', tearin' teeth! They got me in  
em! . . .

Go on away! I never want to see you!  
Go get that red-head fool, tell her I sent you!  
I hope she'll be another fool like me,—  
I hope you burn and burn in Hell!

I hope —  
Oh, what's there anything to hope for, now? . . .

“ In love,” you tells me, “ I’m in love again.      “ In  
Say, he’s a reg’lar doll! Some boy-chum! Love ”  
Oh,  
I’m wild about him! —” And you go on so  
The way you always rave about your “ men.”

In love! The nerve! Why, on’y just last week  
It was a jackie; and the week before  
That willy-boy down to the dry-goods store —  
You make me sick so I can’t hardly speak!

Why, when love hits you, everythin’s a dream,  
It’s like you took some dope, and nothin’s real  
Except one face you just can’t help but see

Wakin’ or sleepin’ . . . All the time you scheme  
How you could help him . . . work . . . or  
lie . . . or steal,  
Die, even. . . . And you squawk “ In love ” to  
me! . . .

## Cats

"It's the little things that count," the feller says.  
The strongest guy will get some little worry,  
And even a cat can get a man, and finish him.

Red Slavin and me was grade school kids together,  
The day us two gets fired out from school  
Fer beatin' up eight bigger guys, us two,  
"Bill," he says, "I'm startin' work tomorrow  
In the contractin' business. Wanta come?"

"I'm gointa be a grocer, Red," I tells him.  
"Well, well, we hadta split some time," says  
Red,  
Rubbin' his lip, "But you just hear me, boy,  
This splittin's only business. You and me  
Is pals for life. Now swear." He grabs my  
mitt,  
We looks each other straight into the eye,  
And says good-night. . . .

And so the years run on. I got this store  
And had a medium luck. Two times I thought  
That I was busted flat; but good old Red

He plunks up with some cash, and saves my neck, Cats  
And all he wants is thanks. I'm all fixed now,  
I learnt my lesson. . . . Red was another story.  
He got to be a knock-out in his line,  
Savin' the dollars, then he makes a deal,  
Borrows, and makes another and another —

Keen, that's him. He always guesses right,  
Yet it's not guessin', neither. Makes invest-  
ments,  
Keeps dozens o' plans a-sailin' at a time,  
And all the while so calm, just like a juggler. . . .

And say, the swell old nights we useta have!  
The same old Red, pore or rich, he was.  
Up to his place, we sit around a table  
Shootin' a friendly game, or pitch, or rummy,  
A coupla bottles o' beer, no airs for his'n.  
And fishin' trips, out to Okachee Lake,  
Snaggin' the bass, and talkin' up old times. . . .

One day Red come and busts in on me, roarin',  
"Bill! It's my birthday. Come along, you buz-  
zard,  
I wanta knock your eye out! Wait'll you see!"  
He drags me out and pops me in his car,  
Won't tell me nothin', only answers, "Wait!"  
Up to the districk where the swells hang out

Cats

He stops in front a house like a hotel,  
So big and ornamented. Red jumps out  
And stands there. Not a word, he can't say  
nothin',  
Swallows a oncet or twicet, and looks at me.  
Finely, "Bill," he says, "how does it hit you?"  
"Whew!" I says, "yourn?" . . . He nods his  
head and blinks.

"Bill, this is what I hoped and dreamed and  
dreamed of.

Remember the times I used to gas about it?  
'Some time,' I says, 'I make my pile. And then  
Red Slavin, the kid that's fired from school, 'll  
show 'em.'

I ain't no swell, and I don't want to be none.  
Only I want a place I can be proud of,  
With rooms where I can bring old pal Bill to,  
Rooms that's as big and shinin' as his heart is.  
And now I got it. Two hundred thousand plunks  
It set me back."

"What? All o' that?" I asts.  
"Most all I got. But don't you worry, Bill,  
Keepin' it goin' 'll keep me humpin', see?  
The wife thinks I gone nuts. But listen here,  
I got to have somep'n to keep up my ambish,  
Somep'n to work for, see? Gosh, but I love  
it." . . .

I didn't see, but still I couldn't tell him.  
But just the same I didn't like it, no sir.  
I had a — you know — feelin', lookin' at it,  
That things was goin' to happen, and happen bad.

Well, sir, I goes away about six months,  
And soon's I come back I calls up old Red.  
The second I seen him, say, I had a start.  
Thinner he was, and lookin' awful peaked.  
“ Why, Red,” I says, “ for gosh sake, what's the  
matter? ”

He looks at me, and looks down at the floor,  
And spits out one word, “ Cats! ”

“ Cats? ” I comes back. . . . “ Yeh, you heard  
me, Cats!

Cats in the alley, cats in the bloody yard,  
Yellin' and hollerin', screechin' all night through.  
My God, I'm goin' crazy, ravin' crazy.  
When the warm weather come, the cats starts in,  
Last month, in May. I can't get sleep at night,  
My nerves is gone. I can't do business, neither.  
I made a big mistake last week on a contract,  
All from the lack o' sleep, lost twenty thousand.”

“ Can't you get rid o' the cats? ” I ast him then.  
“ I tried and tried. It can't be done,” he says.  
“ Then sell the house.” . . .

He blinks at me a second,  
“ Bill, I can’t sell it, no, nor rent it, neither.  
Them cats got to me so, I been a fool.  
I went and talked about it to most everybody,  
Till now they all know all about the cats.  
What’ll I do? For God’s sake, what’ll I do? ”

The phone rings. They wants Red. “ I got to  
go,”

He tells me. “ A big deal I most forgot.  
I’m losin’ my grip, I tell you. Why, I bet  
I’m in to lose five or six thousand more.  
And if I do — I hate to tell you what.  
Cats! Cats! . . . ” he dashes to his car out-  
side. . . .

Next afternoon I’m at my desk, a-puzzlin’  
How I can fix them cats, and help old Red.  
The phone bell starts to jingle. It’s Red’s wife.  
“ I got Red in the country, come out quick.  
He made a bad deal yesterday. He’s sick,  
Ain’t slept a wink last night.” . . .

And when I get there  
I see Red, leanin’ up again a tree,  
Settin’, and lookin’ like a done-up drunk.  
His wife is cryin’. “ Take him for a walk,”  
She wispers, “ Bill, you try to calm him down.  
He had to leave the house — Bill — do you  
think

He's goin' crazy? He won't go away  
To travel, says he's goin to stick it out,  
Fightin' them cats."

Cats

I grabs Red by the shoulders,  
Gives him a shake, yanks him to his feet.  
He don't say nothin', only sorter staggers.  
"What is it, Red? Come on, old feller, shoot!"  
Not a word yet. I slips my arm around him,  
And drags him, walkin'.

After a hundred yards,  
Maybe, he walks his-self, but still ain't peeped  
A word. And so we goes along the road,  
June singin' in the fields and on the trees  
Covered with new leaves; but in my old pal's head  
Nothin' but howls and caterwauls and screeches.

Most of a mile we staggers. Red makes signs  
He wants to rest. I stands there lookin' out  
Over the prairie blazin' full o' flowers;  
A lovely stillness; only the birds keep whistlin',  
Mixed with the clink and clank o' workmen's  
picks,  
Fixin' the track, and a train whistle comin'.

After about a minute, sudden-like  
I hear Red's voice, so quick it makes me jump.  
"I got a plan, Bill. Say, I'll get them cats,

I'll knock 'em cold. Now, first I get some poison,  
Say, Rough on Rats, you see? And take some  
meat

And lay it all around. And then to fix it  
So none of 'em ain't gettin' off, I take  
Some boards and fixes up a huntin' blind  
The way we use ta shoot ducks on the river,  
Billy, old boy. And there's a tall fence runs  
Back o' my yard. A twenty-two 'll carry  
A-plenty. Now the fence is just this far.  
Look." He turns me around. "Now you stand  
here."

I'm glad to humor him. I stands and watches.  
"The fence is here —" He turns and paces off,  
Countin' the paces. "Ninety — ninety-one —"  
He reaches a hundred and fifty — and starts to  
runnin'.

I stands there stupid, not knowin' what to think.  
And — quick — I hears the roarin' of the train.  
And then I seen. . . . "Reddy — for God's  
sake — Red!"

Faster he runs. I dashes after him,  
My heart is chokin' me, holdin' me back.

He jumps the fence, he scrambles up the bank —  
Oh, Christ — please let me reach him! — then I  
stumbles,

Falls flat.— Jump up — the train is almost on Cats  
him,

He's standin' in the track, wavin' his arms,  
Dancin' and yellin', " Cats! Take 'em away!  
I'll fool 'em — Cats! Cats! — never no cats  
No more! " . . .

“ Reddy! Reddy! Jump — jump! ”  
I'm sobbin', cursin', cryin'—

Then the train hits him. . . .

Finis

Don't look like that! You know I druther die  
Than hurt you, ever, any. But it wouldn't  
Be but a worst hurt after, and I couldn't  
Say nothin' else that wouldn't be a lie.

It's a queer sorter way that I love you —  
A kinder quiet, happy peace you bring,  
Like after a rainstorm hearin' a robin sing —  
But it ain't the flamin' way you want me to.

God knows I tried, and even tried to kiss you  
And find it that way, but it wasn't real —  
They wasn't that fire I always hoped I'd  
feel. . . .  
So . . . it's good-bye. . . . Oh, God, I'm goin'  
to miss you,

The way you smile, the little things you say. . . .  
But Truth is Truth. . . . They ain't no other  
way. . . .

Well, boys, that's twicet I win. I leave it lay. Concerning  
"The works or nothin'" — that's me every time. Pikers  
Four Jewish flags I blow, four lovely bucks.  
It's sugar in your mouth! — How's that? All  
set? —  
Go get 'em, dices! — Wham! — Read 'em and  
weep! . . .

Oh, Snake-eyes, acety-ace — you done me wrong!  
Craps, and I lose the works. . . . All right, I'm  
through.

It ain't no use to buck the jinx, but listen,  
Brother, I may be right in a few minutes,  
And when I am — look out for your gol' teeth.

My motter's "play 'em hard or else not any."  
I got no use at all for these here pikers  
That drags down every time they makes a pass.  
A piker is a guy that plays it safe,  
And that's the place I'll say they always ends,  
Safe where they started in. You tell 'em, brother.

Concerning Don't get me wrong, though. All the flops is  
Pikers full

O' suckers that takes a chanst on anythin'.  
You gotta use judgment. But a piker, now,  
They got no faith in nothin', not even theirsself.

Dick Finch, he was a goof like what I mean.  
Well, this bird has a job down to a shoe store,  
Gets just enough to keep his bones together,  
And keeps the same job seven straight-on years  
Without no raise. He come to me one day  
And spills a moanin' howl. It was like this,  
He says, his old man keeps a little store  
Out to the West Side, sellin' fruit and such.  
Now they's a mortgage on it, comin' due,  
And if he can't raise six hunderd cold bucks  
By three weeks from that day, his Pa is ruint.

I stands there for a minute. Then I says,  
"How much dough do you think that you can  
raise  
Right now?" He fishes in his pockets then,  
And hauls me out a roll o' dirty bills.

"Thirty-three dollars. All I saved this year."

"Now, listen, Bud, just how much do you care  
About your Pa? Enough to take a chanst  
On losin' all o' this to save his neck?"

He gulps, and nods his head. "You bet I do." Concerning  
Pikers

"Well, then, I'm gonna give you somep'n straight.  
This dough is all you got. You got no ways  
O' gettin' hold o' no six hunderd dollars,  
Not with no job like yourn. They's just one way:  
You go down to the track this afternoon.

"Now in the third race, they's a dog name  
Lucas.

Two birds I know has got that mule in pickle,  
And somep'n tells me that today's the day  
They set to make a killin'. Nobody knows  
Exceptin' me and them about him, see?  
I got a-plenty right now on his nose.  
You go down there, and find the nearest bookie,  
And put the whole roll on this skate — to win!"

He sorter trembles "What, the whole darn  
roll?"

"That's what I said, you hearn me," answers me.  
"If I ain't right, you lose. But even then  
Your Pa ain't no worse off than he is now.  
And it's a good tip what I'm givin' you.  
The odds you get'll be twenty to one,  
And if that plater romps in to the merry,  
You draw down what you need, six hunderd frog-  
skins,

Concerning  
Pikers

And sixty more besides. . . . Now I ain't sayin'  
That this is no sure thing. But it's a chanst,  
And a durn good one. So hop to it, fella,  
And just this one time say, 'The works or  
nothin'.' "

Honest, you should of saw what this bird done.  
I thought the pore durn simp was goin' to kiss  
me.

I give him a shove, and off he puts a-runnin'.

That night I seen this Finch down to the pool-  
room.

I walks right up and clouts him on the back.

" Well, sport, we sorter knocked 'em for a gool,  
I'll tell the world we did — why, what's the mat-  
ter? "

I looks again. This Finch starts in to blubber,  
" Oh, God! — Oh, God! — " and he can't get no  
further.

I grabs his shoulders, gives him one good shake.

" Say, what the what? " I says. " This ' Lucas '  
win.

He walks in backwards, like I told you, don't he?  
What're you yellin' about? Your Pa is saved,  
You got a nest-egg over, too — but wait —  
You went there, didn't you? "

“ Yeh, I went,” he blubbers. Concerning

“ I seen the prices — ‘ Lucas, twenty to one.’      Pikers

I has my money in my hand, and walks up

And gets right to the bookie — then a somep’n

It seems to scare me. I gets thinkin’ how

Everythin’ that I got is in my hand.

And sorter sudden-like my knees starts tremblin’,

And then — I guess I must of gotten crazy

Just for a minute, and —”

“ Go on, go on! ”

I hollers, feelin’ sick.

“ Oh, God — I done

Like what I allus do — I took and bought

A two-buck ticket for this horse to show,

Just as the bettin’ closed.” . . .

Well, can you beat it?

I guess a piker oncet, a piker forever.

It’s in the blood, you see! . . .

Gimme them bones!

Carpe  
Diem

Why're you always pullin' sob-stuff?  
Honey, what's the big idear?  
"Will I never love no others? —  
How many girls do I get a year?"  
What's the good o' borryin' trouble?  
Damn tomorrow! What's it worth?  
Just this lovin' night can give us  
Everythin' there is on earth.

Say, you know old Apple Annie,  
Blurry-eyes, and nose all blue?  
Oncet she was a knock-out looker,  
Oncet she was as sweet as you.  
While she's creepin' 'round the alleys  
Why d'ye think she smiles all day?  
'Cause her old bean's all chuck full with  
Things no years can't take away.

Kiss me like you want to kiss me,  
Lock your arms around me tight!  
Don't be fightin' what you're feelin'—  
Nothin' matters but tonight!

When you're dry, and white, and pinched-up  
You'll remember times like this —  
You'll be glad and glad, I tell you,  
For the joys you didn't miss.

Carpe  
Diem

WV  
Moonlight

Say — listen —  
If you could only take a bath in moonlight!

Hey! Can't you just see yourself  
Take a runnin' dive  
Inta a pool o' glowin' blue,  
Feel it glidin' over you  
All aroun' and inta you —

Grab a star — huh? —  
Use it for soap;  
Beat it up to bubbles  
And white sparklin' foam —  
Roll and swash —

Gee!

I just like to bet  
You could wash your soul clean  
In moonlight!

Come on, boys, what's your order? This'n's Dry!  
mine.

Bourbon or Scotch or wine? It's Jimmy's  
round —

The last you'll ever get in Jimmy's place.

You're all my boys, ever' last one o' you  
That's come to see ol' Jimmy get his knock-  
out —

Twenty-two years, and this is the end o'  
Jimmy. . . .

Why, sure, I'm busted. I ain't no boot-legger,  
You know my motter, "Jimmy's allus square,"  
The licker's out. The rest'rant closes too.  
I won't charge wild, or run the prices down.  
I'm through, boys; that's the answer.

Say, this place

It was my sweetheart. Say, the only thing  
I ever loved. Them mirrors — and them  
glasses —

Dry!

Them bottles, now — I felt like they was me kids.  
I allus made my meals the same as if  
They was some po'try — say, how many times  
You hear 'em tell they was the best in town?  
And now them pussy-whiskers comes along,  
Closes me up, says I'm a "evil infloonce."

A evil infloonce — me! Why, you boys' fathers  
I know 'em since they come here years ago,  
Steppin' young fellers, breakin' the girls' hearts,  
Courtin', and marryin', and settlin' down,  
Makin' their fortunes,— why, I seen it all.  
Years after years o' life. And all at Jimmy's  
Makin' the friends they stuck to, celebratin'  
The happy things, tryin' to forget the sad ones.

They's lots o' things they learned right here at  
Jimmy's  
They couldn't of learned outside. Like, how to  
drink  
And hold it like a gentleman. And how  
To make a friend and keep him. How to mix  
With other men, and how to entertain 'em,  
And when to keep your mouth shut . . . and  
there's more.  
But that's all finished now. Them whiskers  
wins. . . .

You'll miss me, boys, and say, will I miss you — Dry!  
Them shiny pumps, them lovely hard-boiled shirts  
After the dances. . . .

Well, I said my say.

So come on, grab your glasses. . . . Bottoms up!

Pets

You take a dog, oncet you get it to love you,  
You lose your home, your dough, your grub and  
all,  
The old dog sticks. . . . A cat's a different crit-  
ter,  
More like a slot-machine: put in a meal  
You get a purr right back; no meal, no purr —  
Claws, prob'ly; then, "So long." . . .

I'll take a cur.

Push the screen back just a little more  
So's I can hear 'em playin' "To the Color."  
Wisht I could see the boys, clickin' their heels  
smart,  
All glad and clean, neat fer Retreat, after the  
day's sweat.

"Died of  
Influenza "

Here's me in bed — God, what a joke,—  
Me that wanted to fight, knowin' I gotta croak,—  
Don't kid me, Doc, the head's burnin' up —  
I know, Doc — I know.

I left my job, six bucks a day,  
Expert lathe hand, that was me.  
Told 'em I hated the Dutch, wanted to carry a  
gun,  
Drilled, drilled, drilled,  
Gets hard as nails — then a order come —

"Expert lathe hand, Richard H. Jones  
Transferred at oncet." So I come here

" Died of     Down to the Audience corps — me that wanted  
Influenza "     to fight —

They takes my gun, gives me a shovel.

Audience corps, right — all my buddies gone  
Scrappin' over seas, me left to watch,  
Watch — and dig latrines.

" Jones, lathe hand, what the bloomin' Hell,"  
So the C. O. says, " No place for you  
Just yet awile. Here's a shovel, Jones,  
You do your bit — dig, Jones, dig! —"

That's the way it is, me that wanted to fight  
Stuck in a hole here,  
Diggin' — God! — latrines!

Good ol' army, huh?

Still, I suppose  
Somebody knows  
What's the big idear, and I guess a guy  
Can fight for what he loves,  
And do his damned bit,  
Yeh, and die for it —

Even with a shovel.

There was me, walkin' peaceful down the alley, Riot  
Smokin' a pipe. The sun was blazin' down,  
It was all quiet, like any reg'lar noon-day.  
I squats down on a bar'l, lights a match,  
And, "Bang-bang-bang!" I hears, and drops the  
pipe.

A guy runs at me, hollers, "You! Where is he?  
You seen him!" I just sets there. "Keep your  
shirt on,"  
I says. "Where's who?"

"The Nigger! Where's he at?"  
They gangs around me. I just sets there dumb.  
More on 'em runs up, yelpin' "Get the coon."  
They jams aroun' the cellar; they's a yell,  
They dashes down the steps. . . . A dozen  
shots. . . .  
The white guy next me pitches up his mitts  
And flops down. . . . Then. . . .

Riot

Listen, I wanta ast you,  
You been down to the zoo, feedin' time?  
You seen the keeper thrun a hunk o' steak,  
You hearn the awful snarl the tigers gi'n?  
. . . That mob. . . .

They drags this moanin' nigger out,  
They kicks his face in right before my eyes,  
They plugs him full o' bullets,  
What's left ain't even quiverin' no more.  
I seen it, me. The wagon comes a-clangin',  
Nobody left but me to tell about it,  
Me and the half-killed bum. . . .

And now you come,  
Tryin' to make me swear before a judge  
This pore old alley-cat was goin' gunnin',  
And murderin' white guys. . . .

I s'pose I was a dumb-bell. That's what Mame ~~Mame~~  
said,

Least wise she didn't say it in them words,  
But "dumb-bell"—that was what she meant, all  
right,

And all because I couldn't understand her.

But what can you do with a girl that wants to  
set

Out on a rock and watch the waves come up,  
Right in plain daylight? And you're talkin' to  
her,

And all at oncet she says, "Can't you keep quiet?  
Can't you see the waves is whisperin' secrets at  
me?" . . .

—If she wouldn't of been so wonderful to look  
at,

And so darn sweet, the few times that she *was*  
sweet,

I wouldn't never fooled with her at all.

But that's the funny thing. The more I seen  
her,

~~Mame~~

And the more she went off into — you know —  
fits

Like she was miles away, the more I wanted  
her. . . .

Here's one trick I put up with from this Mame.  
One time at ten P. M. she comes to the house,  
Says, "Get your heavy coat, we're goin' ridin'."  
"Ridin'," I says. "Say, Mame, what's eatin' you?  
A blizzard's outside, and the worst this year."  
"Shut up. Come on," she says, and drags me  
out.

We rides two hours in a open hansom,—  
I guess it was one that Noah had in the ark —  
The snow just stigin' and beatin' on our face,  
And all because Mame never done it before,  
And seen the cab, and wanted to. She said  
It was a real adventure. . . . I got chil-  
blains. . . .

What can you do when you take a girl to dinner,  
And she goes and orders — heck — of all things  
— snails!

And when I ast her to a real good show,  
She makes me change it to some darn grand oprer,  
And won't set downstairs, but she has to stay  
Up in the Peanut Gallery, with the Dagoes.

I sure did stand a lot! . . . She was bad enough  
In the city; but when she got out to the country

She sure complete went wild. If she seen a field ~~Mame~~  
Where they was grass and flowers, she takes a  
run

And jumps and rolls aroun'; and not just her,  
She makes me do it, too. I was so shamed,  
It wasn't right, us bein' so old, you might say. . . .

~~And one time towards evenin' we was walkin',  
And come to a little crick. The fish was jumpin',  
And right away she says, "I want to fish!"  
We couldn't fish, I argues, there wasn't no poles,  
Nor hooks, nor lines nor nothin'. She says,  
"Hush.~~

~~I got a pin. You bend it on a rock,  
I'll get a line, all right. Go on and bend it."  
Whiles I was turned aroun', I hears a rip,  
She hands me a long piece of her underskirt,  
Honest, it made me blush. She breaks a stick  
off,~~

~~And catches a grasshopper, and she fishes.  
And what do you think? She caught a fish, at  
that,~~

~~A thing about two inches long. And say,  
I thought it was a whale, the fuss she made.~~

~~She was so happy, I didn't know what to think,  
And afterwards we laid down on a haystack,  
And she was watchin' the stars, and sorter hum-  
min',~~

Mame

So sweet I got a notion it was me  
That she was singin' about, and I tried to kiss  
her.

That sure was one bum guess. She turns all  
white,

And says, "All right, you had to ruin it.  
I might of knew." And then we went back home,  
Her starin' straight ahead, and sayin' nothin' . . .

And then, the next day, she was fine again.

I couldn't tell what she was ever thinkin'.  
Things went on that way, me bein' her dog,  
You might say, tryin' to bust away, and yet  
All the time comin' back. So then, one day,  
I swore I'd have a showdown. I was through  
With all this foolin'. Either I was right  
Or either wrong, and I was goin' to find out.

I ast her to eat lunch with me at Schlogel's.  
I gets there first, all set up and excited,  
And in a minute here she comes, all fixed up,  
Prettier'n a little red wagon. We sets down,  
And "That's a nice new suit. How good you  
look,"

Says Mame, and so I'm feelin' fine, right off,  
And she is wonderful, laughin' and talkin',  
So's I can't hardly wait to say my spiel.

I orders, and the waiter beats it. Then **Mame**  
I clears my throat, and looks at her, and starts,  
“Mame, I got somethin’ that I want to ast you —  
Mame —” And I starts to lean ’way over to her,  
And finds my pants is ruined. *suspense*  
What do you think?

Some boob has stuck a great big wad of gum  
Right to the chair, and I was settin’ in it! *better*

You know, I got so mad I couldn’t think,  
I clean forgets all I was tryin’ to say, *goes*  
And hollers “Damn it!” . . . There was my  
new suit

All ruined with that gum. Mame busts out  
laughin’,  
And when she laughs I’m gettin’ all the sorer. *→*

Then she gets sore, too. “What’s a little thing  
Like that,” she says. “You ack just like a kid!”  
Maybe I did, but who’s the guy that wouldn’t?  
I calls the manager, and bawls him out  
Like any guy would do.

And suddenly *→*  
Mame she gets right up, and she sorter smiles  
And says, “Good-bye. And this is real good-  
bye.”

Charley, you’ll never learn to really live  
Unless you get so little hurts don’t matter.

~~Mame~~

Life is too big to let a thing like gum  
Mean such a lot to you." . . . And out she sails.  
I calls her up next day. She tells me no,  
She found that her and me can't hit it off.

↖ "Here's the whole truth: <sup>charley</sup> You drag me down,"  
she says.

↗ "You don't know how to dream, and never won't.  
That's all. Good-bye."  
→ ↘



Snoozer      Of all the joke curs that I ever seen,  
This Snoozer sure did get the old brown derby.  
Aunt Effie allus said he was a poodle —  
To me he looked like a white muff on wheels.  
Pa useta say nobody couldn't love  
A thing like that, exceptin' somep'n mean,  
Which he was meanin' to say the one that owned  
                him,  
Aunt Effie.

                They was a pair, I'll tell the world.  
Aunt Effie, she was sure one born old maid.  
The face the good Lord gi'n her was the kind  
You make after a dose o' Castor Oil;  
Far from improvin' Nature, she lets things slide;  
Her voice cut like a knife on everybody  
Except that awful cur, this Snoozer dog.

We all was sure she had a mint o' money —  
Some said her step-ma left her thirty thousand.  
You couldn't tell. Her room cost two bucks a  
                week,

She cooked her meals over a gas-jet. But Snoozer  
One thing was sure: Snoozer was always fixed  
With silky ribbons, blankets, even shoes  
Made out o' wool, for them ridic'lous paws.  
Aunt Effie loved that dog; the world outside  
She hated; and it paid her back with interest. . . .

One day Pa runs in, hollers, "Effie's dyin'.  
I'm goin' over." I follers, just to see  
What happens. I hung back down on the  
landin'.

No sooner Pa goes up, when Uncle Jim,  
Aunt Mame and Cousin Henry rushes by me. . . .  
Sudden, I hears a yelp, a door bangs open,—  
Wild cursin',—the whole crew runnin' out, and  
then  
More howls and yips upstairs. Then this here  
Snoozer  
Limpin' and draggin' his foot. Aunt Effie's  
voice  
Like she was lost in the dark, cryin' and cryin',  
"Snoozer! Come back! — Snoozer!" . . .

I squats down quick,  
And pats the floor. "Hyuh, Snoozer! Nice ol'  
doggie,"  
I says like sugar. Snoozer looks around  
Like he can't trust his ears, hearin' a voice

Snoozer

That ain't Aunt Effie's, talkin' to him nice.  
I crope up on him, while he stands there shiverin',  
And grabs him gentle. Then I takes him quick  
Up to the room, and plumps him on the bed.

Aunt Effie give a moan, like to a baby,  
And hugs and kisses that there pitiful cur,  
Me standin' first on one foot then the other.

I hears her voice then, feeble and soft and strange,  
I wouldn't of knowed it. "Bub," she says, "I'm  
goin'.

Tomorrow I'll be dead. But praise to God,  
Before I died I seen two things was wonderful.  
One was what happened when your Pa came in,  
With all them other smirkin' hypocrites,  
Tryin' to make friends, now they's sure I'm  
dyin'.

Tonight they troops here, all as smooth as silk  
After my money. But this Snoozer here,  
He knows what's true from lies. He gi'n one  
look,

He snaps your Aunt Mame's finger, then he grabs  
Your Pa's pants"—then she squeaks a feeble  
laugh.

"You should of saw it, Bub. Their real selfs  
showed

Like lightnin'. Two on 'em kicked pore little Snoozer  
Snoozer,  
They tried to kill him . . . yeh, fine chanst they  
got  
For any o' my money. . . .

“ Now this Snoozer,  
He's all I got, or ever had. He loves me,—  
Don't um, ol' Snoozer? — and I sure love him.  
The other wonderful thing I seen is this:  
You bein' kind to Snoozer. Never I hoped  
To see no member of my lovely fambly  
That had a heart, was real and genuwine.  
I never ast no favors from nobody —  
I'm goin' to ast one now: Will you take  
Snoozer  
And keep him for me, always treat him kind? ”

“ Why, sure,” I says, “ I will.” I felt a lump  
Down in my throat, it was so sad, and all.

“ Thank God,” she says. “ All right, Bub, I can  
trust you.

Now, go away.— No, go on! — Leave me alone.  
I want to finish out the way I lived,  
Nobody 'round. Go on.”

I finds the door,  
She says, “ Good bye. . . . Don't go back on  
your promise.” . . .

Snoozer      She died in the night, I guess.    Pa and the others  
They made a loud noise over the funeral,  
With carriages and things.    And two days after  
Old Lawyer Green he reads her will in the parlor.

“She leaves to Bub, here, that there pet dog,  
Snoozer.

The money — only seven thousand, it is,  
Goes to the Smithfield Home for Friendless  
Dogs.”

Oh, gee, you should of hearn the row there was!  
If what Aunt Effie wanted was a cussin’  
She sure did get it.    If she ain’t in Hell  
It ain’t because the whole pack didn’t hope  
so. . . .

For me, I made a promise, and I kept it.  
Three times I had to hide the dog from Pa  
So’s that he couldn’t kill it.    Freddy Mason  
And me, we built a small house outa boxes  
Down to his yard, and Snoozer stayed all summer  
In there, without Pa knowin’.    By the winter  
I had a job the other side o’ town,  
Roomin’ alone, and took this Snoozer with me.

You know, it’s queer, that dog got reas’nable.  
After a month o’ mournin’, sniffin’ around  
Lookin’ for old Aunt Effie, he got to like me.

You won't believe me, but he changed complete. Snoozer  
He useta watch out for me, in the evenin',  
Comin' from work. . . . He learnt some dandy  
tricks,  
And — well, to make it short, I come to love  
him. . . .

Five year ago I got him. Even then  
He musta been fifteen year old, or more.  
This last year he was gettin' feebler and feebler.  
And then, two weeks ago, I come home late,  
And finds pore Snoozer stretched out by the fire-  
place.

It's durn lonely  
Around the place without him. There's a some-  
thin'  
You give a dog, nobody, not your friends,  
Nor wife, nor kids, even, don't never get. . . .

And say, look what old Green he sends to me  
This mornin'. It's a note, Aunt Effie wrote it:

"The person that gets a dog to trust and love  
him,  
I think he gets enough reward from that.  
And yet, if Lawyer Green is satisfied  
You kept your promise, here's a little present  
From me and Snoozer. Take it with our thanks."

Snoozer

And underneath, a note from Lawyer Green,  
“ Please call, next Saturday, at my address  
To get your check that’s here, three thousand dol-  
lars  
Plus five years’ interest, at six per cent.” . . .

(Easter Sunday, April, 1918)

Head  
Lines

They's headlines snarlin' at me from the "Journal,"

"Hun Drive Slows."

Slows! And I prayed last night it was stopped!

A robin just hopped

On top of a red-bud tree,

Looks to me like a rose

That a girl's holdin' up next to her cheek. . . .

Or maybe like that liquid fire them Germans  
uses. . . .

Clink! — Clink! —

The sidewalks is ringin' from the feet

Of folks goin' to church, all neat,

Gettin' ready to split their voice

Singin', "Rejoice! Rejoice!

He is risen!"

Like a man outa prison

The vi'lets is bustin' outa the ground. . . .

The headlines I'm starin' at jumps and lurches:

Head  
Lines

"Mystery Gun Slays Crowds  
Prayin' in Paris Churches." . . .

Here comes a young sojer  
With a girl hangin' onto his arm.  
Right here only a year ago Jim useta walk  
And him and me would useta talk  
All about the glories o' fightin' for your coun-  
try. . . .

"Airman Falls in Gallant Fight"—

That was Jim's headline. . . . I was Jim's  
girl. . . .

Just such a light  
He useta have in his face,  
Just like that he had a sorter grace  
When he walked. . . . Just like that  
His hair useta curl. . . .

Apple-blossoms is ridin' along on the breeze,  
Flutterin' down from the trees  
Like a sweet-smellin' snow —  
Or like frost on them graves in Picardy. . . .

Oh, God!

Good God, almighty God,  
Are you gonna stand by  
And let all the things that was beautiful die?

Them Huns is killin' even the Spring,  
Every little no-account lovely thing,  
Twistin' everythin' inta pain. . . .

Head  
Lines

Oh, God,  
Won't Beauty never come no more again! . . .

White  
Collars

Say, Ma, I want to tell you about Pa.  
We got to have a new deal in this house.  
I ain't gonna stand no more o' his fool talk.

Don't bust in on me. I know what I'm doin'.  
This ain't no new idear. Many a time  
I been about to say it, only now  
I come to where it's gettin' on my nerves.  
He's like a phonograft with just one record,  
And he keeps playin' it, over and over and over.

Seems like the first stuff I can ever remember  
Is all that bunk about a "edjucation,"  
Pa bein' fixed to go down to the U,  
And then his Pa dies, and he goes to work  
To keep old Gramma goin'. "Will," he says,  
"I never got the thin' I wanted most.  
But never mind, you'll get it, Will, you'll get it.  
My son is goin' to be a college man.  
I'm savin' all the time a College Fund."

Remember how he always talked that way?      White  
And then the day I went down to the High School      Collars  
He give me a swell new watch, and pats my shoulder,  
And says, "Good boy, Will, now you got the  
system.  
Plug at the books, and plug, and keep a-pluggin;  
They's stuff in books you can't get nowhere else,  
Stuff that'll give you dreams, and that's what  
counts;  
Men that can dream is the ones that' beats the  
world."

The first time that I got real good and sore  
Was when he points me out that Freddy Keefe,  
And says he hopes that I should be like that.  
Why should I want to be a sorter mouse,  
Nice enough feller, but a-scared to fight  
Or play, or nothin' else but fool with books?  
I couldn't help if I was born the way  
I was, and liked to run around, and hated  
Latin, and that damn Algebra, and so on.  
But even then I might of gotten through  
If he wouldn't of give me a lickin' for not passin'  
Into the third year High. That spilled the  
beans.

I only stuck that long because I knowed  
How much it meant to him. But gettin' licked —  
You said yourself you didn't blame me much

White  
Collars

For beatin' it the way I did, and bummin'  
Down into Texas. . . . Talk about "edjuca-  
tion"!

I seen more in one year than lots o' guys  
'Ll ever see if they lives to be a hunderd.

Pa knows I wasn't never any burden.  
I earned my keep and more, didn't I, now?  
I useta feel kinder sorry now and then,  
Special the time I found the old bank book,  
And ast him what would he do with the College  
Fund

He was still keepin', though I was sixteen then,  
And he says he didn't know, but maybe hoped  
They was a chanst I'd change my mind some day.

I guess he thought I was a just plain bum.  
It sorter socked him when he ast Sam French  
Where I was workin' and repairin' autos,  
And Sam tells him I was the best repair man  
On the West Side.

And when I comes and tells him  
I wants to borry the College Fund to use  
For capital to start my own garage,  
I swear I think he cried when he give it to me.  
He needn't been that way. I paid it back,  
Yeh, and I give him interest, eight per cent.  
It didn't take me only two years to do it.

Look what I done for you and him and me!  
Though I ain't the one to say it, do you know  
Where they's another guy that's twenty-seven  
And makes the dough I make? All in six years  
I built a fine big house, I got a Packard  
To ride you in, and business is boomin'  
So's now I aim to open up three branches.

And here last night this Freddy Keefe comes over,  
And him and Pa is gassin' roun' the fire.  
A fine, hot-lookin' bird this Freddy is,  
With his suit shinin', and his scuffed-up shoes,  
Tellin' me how he loved his work and all,  
Him a perfesser, tryin' to teach a gang  
O' shell-shocks how to read and write and such.

And when I shows him all my new silk shirts  
He sorter smiles, and says, "You're lucky, Will.  
I won't get a new overcoat this winter;  
I bought a season ticket to the concerts."  
And then him tellin' Pa about some painter  
That had a exposition in the Institute —  
All about Whoozis, some new Irish pote,  
And somethin' about the "grace o' Grecian scul-  
cher."

The grace o' my cat's ankle! Edjucation!  
That's all the good his learnin' done for him.  
He ain't got nothin', and he never won't have.

I couldn't listen to that line o' bunk,  
So I just starts the player-piano goin',  
And Freddy says good-bye and goes away.

That's when Pa comes and has the nerve to tell  
me

I shoulda listened to Freddy. "I just tell you,"  
He says. "You needn't be so rude to Freddy.  
He's gettin' a repitation everywhere."

"For what? For shiny clo'es?" I comes back,  
laughin'.

Pa's face gets red. "No, for a lit'ry cricket."  
"Haw haw," I says. "He sure chirps mighty  
feeble."

That's when Pa makes the break that gets my  
goat.

"Well, you can laugh," he says, "But just the  
same

I'd give the world if you was only like him."

Just think o' that! Now, honest, can you tie it?  
Me, that'll be a real rich man some day,  
Trade places with a teacher! With a bum  
That scarcely gets a good square meal a week!  
Concerts, and pitchers — yeh, and I spose pink  
teas.

All right, if that's the kinda things Pa wants  
He can get out and find it. I won't keep him,

And feed him swell, and dress him swell, and give him White  
Collars  
A great big room, and rides in bran-new Pack-  
ards.

If he wants what this Freddy Keefe is got,  
By God, he's got to get it somewhere's elset.  
But I ain't goin' to hear no more about it.

You tell him this for me — tell him I mean it:  
Either he shuts his trap and keeps it shut  
About this edjucation stuff, or elset  
He can get the Hell out of here.

That's all!

“ Catfish ”    When Jake played his cornet, his face  
Green            Looked like a catfish when you land him;  
                    We called him “ Catfish ” Green, and laughed,  
                    And never tried to understand him.

He sawed and hammered at his bench  
                    Without a word or smile, all day;  
But when night come, he'd get that horn  
                    And be a changed man, right away.

I see him now, when he'd oblige  
                    With “ Silver Threads Among — ” you know —  
His fingers lovin' at the keys,  
                    The long notes wailin' smooth and low.

That was great stuff.    But when he led  
                    The concerts with the other boys  
Down to the square, in summer-time,  
                    Why, Hell ain't never hearn such noise.

They squawked and blared, and lost the time —  
                    We laughed until we almost died.

But " Catfish "— he would yell and swear —  
And oncet he broke down flat, and cried.

" Catfish "  
Green

Still, through three years, two times a week  
He made that awful band rehearse,  
And never seemed to realize  
It never got no good, but worse.

And then, one day the news flew round,  
" On July Fourth our town will be  
Host to our country's President "—  
Jake grinned, and muttered, " Now you'll  
see! "

And every night that June we heard  
Them trombones' snarls and cornets' ravin's;  
The cashier of the Farmers' Bank  
Said Jake had drawed out all his savin's.

The great day come. And down the road  
A bust o' music, like a storm,  
And here comes " Catfish," with his band  
Each in a brand-new uniform!

Jake and the boys struts on the stand —  
Good Lordy! What a high-tone manner!  
The Pres'dent halts. The band explodes  
Into the " Star Spangled Banner."

" Catfish "    Never no band played like that day,  
Green            It sure did make my pulses jump.  
                  Jake takes the high note sweet and clear —  
                  And sinks down with a little thump.

The music stops — they lifts him up —  
                  One little sigh, and Jake is dead.  
That high-note climax of his life  
                  Bust a blood-vessel in his head.

Well, at that time, to my kid mind  
                  Thinkin' o' Jake, it sure did seem  
A foolish way to waste a life  
                  Chasin' a silly sort o' dream.

But now I kinder guess I hope  
                  The Lord will treat me that way, too.  
I'll gladly go, like " Catfish " Green,  
                  Knowin' I made my dream come true.

Oh, yes, I spose a day has got to come L'Envoi  
 That gets around to all of us at last,  
 That Springtime won't mean much excep' a sea-  
     son,  
 And April nights won't make our heart beat  
     fast.

And we can watch the long green rollers breakin',  
 And be real pleased to stay all safe on shore —  
 Nothin' but catchin' colds, or wearin' rubbers,  
 Or things like that'll matter any more.

And glad or sad times that we useta feel so,  
 And hopes and thrills that we could find in  
     looks,  
 And how a kiss could burn us like a fire —  
 They'll be like stuff we read about in books.

Let's don't be like the others — scared or sour,  
 Forgettin' that life wasn't always slow,  
 Growlin' at fun and dancin' and happy laughin',  
 Snoopin' and spyin' 'round, and snarlin',  
     "No!"





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